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Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Contribution by the United Nations Children's Fund**

Summary

The present note outlines the activities of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with, and in support of, indigenous peoples (especially women and children), since the last session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and in line with the Forum's recommendations. The activities have focused on promoting indigenous children's rights, including access to health and education, empowering women to ensure their participation and influence in decision-making, and working with Governments to ensure that their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals take account of the specific needs and situation of indigenous peoples. In particular, the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean issued a framework document to guide UNICEF activities with indigenous peoples in that region.

* E/C.19/2005/1.

** The present document was submitted late to ensure the inclusion of the most recent information.

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I. Response to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

A. Indigenous women and girls

1. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) mission statement declares that UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities. Because indigenous women are most often discriminated against and marginalized, as indigenous and as women, UNICEF pays special attention to indigenous women and girls, supporting a wide range of activities aiming to empower them and fulfil their rights.

2. The Forum made several recommendations to the United Nations system concerning the non-discrimination, empowerment and participation of indigenous women. UNICEF believes that women's and children's rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing; the realization of children's rights therefore implies the fulfilment of women's rights.

3. In Guatemala for instance, girls and women in general and indigenous ones in particular suffer from discrimination and lack of opportunity. Decentralization laws, the Development Councils and the reforms of municipal codes, implemented in July 2002, have opened up possibilities for the participation of women and indigenous peoples in decision-making at municipal, departmental and national levels. Traditional structures, however, limit the participation of girls and women in society. Nonetheless the participation and influence of women in different local and national contexts has improved somewhat. UNICEF has contributed to the dissemination of knowledge on effective laws that support civic participation of disadvantaged sectors of the population, while promoting the involvement of Mayan women in politics. Social auditing has been fostered to monitor progress in the advancement of women and girls, gender equality and women's participation in decision-making processes.

4. In Bolivia, the integrated local development programme continued to promote gender equality and affirmative action directed at creating and empowering a pool of indigenous women leaders, as well as ensuring their participation in social oversight and community development mechanisms (such as the administrative board of microcredit community banks, or community water and sanitation committees). In addition, the programme supports the active participation of women. The process includes adult literacy and alternative education activities primarily aimed at women, as well as the training of personnel from the departmental units on gender, to facilitate initiatives (such as leadership forums) for women counsellors in municipal governments.

5. One serious problem faced by indigenous women is violence. To address the special concerns and needs of women, UNICEF has a strategy specifically devised to tackle gender-based violence. In Bolivia for example, where the majority of the population is indigenous, the UNICEF country office has helped create educational materials on women's rights, assisted social reinsertion activities for girls living in the street, contributed to a study on gender violence, and sponsored a module on violence against women in the recent Demographic and Health Survey. Indicators related to gender were included in the various studies carried out in 2004. Finally,

through and in coordination with the inter-agency committee on gender, the country office provided technical assistance to the Vice-Ministry for Women's Affairs in elaborating the latter's strategic plan of action.

6. In Venezuela, in 2004, UNICEF and partner bodies inaugurated a support system for female victims of domestic violence (similar to the one UNICEF had supported previously nationwide), with the installation of a free telephone line in Zulia, a region with a large indigenous population. In addition, initiatives were organized to train and disseminate information on women's rights and gender equality.

7. In Mexico, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized a meeting for indigenous female leaders in the region in order to open dialogue between them and United Nations agencies, as a basis for future work.

8. In Namibia, UNICEF has provided support to two NGOs in a rights education campaign conducted in 13 regions, focusing on violence against women and children, as well as on the available legislation for the protection of victims of violence. Print and electronic information, education and communication materials have been developed on gender-based violence, juvenile justice, girls' education, a domestic violence directory and the Married Persons Equality Act (translated into five indigenous languages).

B. Indigenous women and children living in conflict areas

9. UNICEF works to ensure the protection of women and children living in conflict areas, focusing on the most vulnerable. Where indigenous peoples suffer disproportionately from the effects of conflict, UNICEF provides emergency assistance and advocates for their protection, including in the elaboration of peace agreements, as it did in Guatemala in the 1990s.

10. In Colombia, UNICEF, together with its partners, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has provided aid to five indigenous communities displaced from the Opogadó river (1,480 persons) and 1,620 Afro-descendant persons from the Bojayá and San Juan rivers (624 persons); accompanied and provided emergency aid to 22 families repatriated from Panama; supported displaced people from nine communities of the two municipalities of San Luis and San Francisco in eastern Antioquia; and in the latter region is working for children's integral care with a locally formed team in the Aquitania community. In Colombia, UNICEF also supports mine risk prevention and attention to victims in indigenous communities, as well as psychosocial rehabilitation programmes, taking cultural specificities into consideration.

C. Intercultural and bilingual education, including girls' education

11. In its recommendations at its third session, the Forum emphasized the importance of intercultural and bilingual education for indigenous children, drawing special attention to the importance of girls' education. UNICEF welcomes these recommendations (see sect. III below) containing information on UNICEF work for the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2 (Universal primary education).

D. Migration

12. As pointed out by the Forum, migration is an issue that seriously affects indigenous communities and can disrupt children's development. UNICEF works to protect migrant children in order to minimize the effects of migration on the fulfilment of their rights.

13. In Panama for instance, an external evaluation was conducted in 2004 on a project entitled "Social and educational alternatives to child labour in east Chiriqui coffee plantations" implemented in 2000 by a national NGO. The project comprises socio-educational programmes for indigenous children who migrate with their families during coffee harvesting in east Chiriquí. Since 2000, 40 committees for the defence of children's rights have been organized within the region, each one with a situation analysis and relative action plans, using community participation.

E. Health

14. In the area of health, UNICEF programmes aim to promote the right to access to quality health services for all women and children. In indigenous communities, this right can only be fulfilled if health services take into account indigenous cultures and if discrimination towards indigenous people is eliminated. UNICEF has been very active in supporting Governments and among indigenous communities in developing and implementing local and national intercultural public policies for prenatal and post-natal care. Where health services are not readily available, UNICEF has helped to build the capacity of indigenous communities to adopt healthy and hygienic behaviours, treat diseases and identify cases that require referral to health services. UNICEF activities in this area range from malaria prevention to maternal health and HIV/AIDS awareness.

15. In Peru, UNICEF activities focus on maternal health. In 2004, UNICEF supported the training of personnel at health facilities, which mainly involved teaching indigenous health workers the basics of proper care during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as how to recognize and refer cases involving obstetric and perinatal emergencies. Support is also given to ensure that health facilities are better equipped and their transportation and communication capacities are enhanced. The objective of the programme was to tailor health care to the local culture, especially in indigenous areas of the Andean and Amazon regions and encourage community participation in maternal and newborn care, including through the establishment of "maternity houses", to give women in isolated rural areas better access to health facilities. For example, in Rio Santiago, populated by the Jibaras tribe, whose members are not accustomed to using health services for maternal or infant care, trained personnel now attend 27 per cent of expectant mothers, as against only 6 per cent two years ago. Also, professional care at birth and access to prenatal check-ups have increased steadily (in the other areas as well) with the technical and financial support of UNICEF. To date, 18,500 women and a comparable number of newborns have benefited from this initiative.

16. As regards the prevention and treatment of malaria in Bolivia, UNICEF has helped to develop the ability of departmental health service personnel to manage and analyse information related to malaria. Furthermore, collaborative action among the Ministry of Health, community groups and indigenous grass-roots organizations

has helped to improve the early detection, timely diagnosis and treatment of malaria. UNICEF has contributed to the training of 1,800 health workers to ensure the implementation of universal maternal and child health insurance regulations and procedures in 53 municipalities in five departmental health services. In coordination with indigenous grass-roots organizations, UNICEF has also designed and printed communication materials that were used for health workshops for community leaders and health workers.

17. In Fiji in 2004, UNICEF supported a regional conference on accelerating action against HIV/AIDS in the Pacific, co-hosted with the Fiji Great Council of Chiefs, held in Vuda, Fiji. The conference brought together government and non-government personnel from 16 Pacific island countries to look at gaps and overlaps in regional programmes and to consider progress towards meeting international commitments. Three key advocacy areas have been identified: women, girls and HIV/AIDS; youth education and HIV/AIDS; and stigma, discrimination and HIV/AIDS.

II. Other significant information

A. A regional framework for UNICEF activities with indigenous peoples

18. During the Sixth Ministerial Summit on Children and Adolescents, held in Costa Rica in 2004, the UNICEF regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean launched a framework document to guide UNICEF activities with indigenous children in the region. The document was elaborated in close consultation with indigenous representatives. A steering committee of indigenous representatives, including members of the Forum from the region, was established in 2003 with the mandate to provide comments at every stage of the elaboration process, and generally to advise the regional office on its activities with indigenous peoples.

19. The framework document, entitled "Equality with dignity: towards new forms of action with indigenous children in Latin America", examines the dimensions of what/who is indigenous in Latin America; the implications of identity and territory for indigenous people; ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity in Latin America; education as a cornerstone for the development of indigenous populations; intercultural relationships; and the rights of indigenous children and adolescents. The document also analyses the current obstacles to advancing the realization of the rights of indigenous children and adolescents. UNICEF hopes that the document will be widely used by Governments, civil society, indigenous movements and international organizations, with a view to attaining the Millennium Development Goals with indigenous peoples.

B. UNICEF-Peru: protection from extinction of indigenous populations in the Amazon

20. Since late 2003, UNICEF has supported an ambitious project in Peru, aimed at preventing the extinction of two indigenous groups in the Amazon region.

21. In Peru, a hepatitis-B epidemic threatens the Candoshi and Shapra indigenous groups, who live along the Morona and Pastaza rivers in the Department of Loreto, an isolated and secluded area of the Peruvian Amazon. Hepatitis B and hepatitis D (Delta) are responsible for 58 per cent of the deaths in this geographical area. The epidemic is spreading to nearby districts, with cases also being reported among other indigenous peoples, such as the Achuar and the Quichua. There are only 2,080 Candoshi left, while the Shapra amount to no more than 800. Studies show that 73 per cent of the members of these tribes have contracted the hepatitis B virus, threatening them with extinction.

22. In September 2003, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health launched an emergency vaccination campaign to rescue these communities; today, UNICEF-Peru can safely say that the survival of the Candoshi and the Shapra is assured. A cold chain is now operating, with seven vaccination posts and equipment for the vaccination brigades to transport the vaccines. Health facilities have been consolidated; trained Candoshi nurses provide reliable information at each vaccination post. In the communities under the nurse's responsibility, planning is facilitated by information on the number of expectant mothers, their gestation periods, geographic distance from the post, through to the amount of fuel required to reach each community. Today, UNICEF-Peru reports that 164 of 193 newborns in indigenous communities were vaccinated within 24 hours of birth (85 per cent average coverage).

23. The vaccination campaign has been one of the most complex UNICEF-led interventions in Peru. The sole communication routes are the rivers that link one settlement to another. Long distances separate these communities from each other and from the rest of the country. It takes UNICEF staff more than three days to reach the Candoshi and the Shapra communities from Lima. Almost all births take place at home. There are no health facilities close at hand. When a child is born, a vaccinator from the nearest health facility travels to the infant's home to give the vaccine within 24 hours of birth, a basic condition for protecting the child against the hepatitis-B virus. Health workers use a "census of expectant mothers" to plan visits. The census is updated with the help of tribal chiefs ("apus") and health promoters, who report pregnancies and make frequent visits to the area.

24. UNICEF-Peru is now using this successful experience to promote the extension of these initiatives to other areas of the country.

C. UNICEF-Venezuela: study on upbringing patterns in six indigenous communities

25. In Venezuela, the UNICEF country office conducted a study on traditional upbringing patterns in indigenous communities. The objective was to gather data on the modes of socialization of children in indigenous communities and on the transmission of cultural models. The entire project was conducted with the free, prior and informed consent of the communities. During the first stage, the project was presented to an Amazon regional organization, which requested that it be presented to each ethnic organization. These organizations asked in turn that school teachers be involved, as they would be in a better position to give an informed consent. Community organizations gave their consent with several conditions, including that the study be used to elaborate publications for school teachers. The

results of the study were then validated by communities, through workshops composed of 10 to 15 people, including women. During the workshops, the results were discussed, data were added and amendments were proposed. Finally, communities were asked to discuss which data should be published. The whole process therefore involved the active participation of the communities, which promoted ownership of the study by indigenous communities, increased the relevance of the study, enhanced the skills of school teachers in particular, and favoured the dissemination of the results of the study to those most likely to use them: the indigenous communities themselves.

III. Information and suggestions concerning Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples

26. The Millennium Development Goals are targets set by States in order to pursue and assess development in certain areas. However, except for the Goals related to primary education and gender equality in education at all levels, none are universal. Therefore, a Government may reach the Goals — if only measured by national averages — by undertaking policies aimed at improving the situation of the majority of the population, without specifically targeting those who have been traditionally excluded and marginalized. The Millennium Development Goals should not, however, be seen in isolation, but as part of a framework that includes the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which reaffirms the centrality of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and respect for equal rights without discrimination. It is therefore not acceptable that indigenous peoples be left behind.

27. UNICEF has been calling for Governments to eliminate disparities as they strive to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and is committed to supporting them in their efforts to reach the Goals. To this end, UNICEF also urges the allocation of appropriate public investment for the universal achievement of the Goals, guided by human rights principles. UNICEF supports studies that identify disparities and discrimination within a country with a view to promoting policies that correct disparities. Participation and accountability are also key elements in this process. Policies and programmes are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with the participation of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples. Because all human rights are interrelated, UNICEF pays special attention to the respect of cultural rights, especially for indigenous peoples. UNICEF believes that cultural rights should be respected as human rights to which every child is entitled, as stated by article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and as a condition that will ensure the effectiveness of policies and programmes.

Millennium Development Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

28. The first Millennium Development Goal is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. As noted in *The State of the World's Children 2005*, poverty is one of the most serious threats to childhood. UNICEF believes that poverty is a complex concept that goes beyond income poverty, as it deprives people of their rights.

29. UNICEF has proposed the following working definition of children living in poverty: "Children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal

members of society."[1] Poverty deprives children of many of their rights, including their right to survival, health and nutrition, education, participation, and protection from harm, exploitation and discrimination. These deprivations can have long-term effects on young children. Conversely, investing in children is the best way to break the cycle of poverty.

30. In this context, all UNICEF activities address poverty and its manifestations. In the case of indigenous peoples, UNICEF intervention covers a wide range of issues, as presented in this report, as well as canvassing and social mobilization activities aimed at increasing the visibility of indigenous peoples in public policy and at raising awareness of their situation. For instance, in the report prepared by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the achievement of the MDGs in Latin America, UNICEF was responsible for raising awareness and drawing attention to the impact that poverty has on indigenous children. Moreover, UNICEF has strongly urged all stakeholders to take due account of factors such as migration and vulnerabilities related to natural disasters and their impact on the achievement of this goal.

31. In Mexico for example, several projects have been launched to increase the visibility of indigenous children. One project with the Commission for the Development of Indigenous People and the United Nations Development Programme extracts specific data on indigenous children from existing sources, to prepare for the next publication on the fulfilment of rights in the series "Situation of Economic and Social Development of indigenous population in Mexico".

32. Significant progress has also been made in the academic field. UNICEF has initiated collaboration with the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), which is generating a curriculum with the objective to integrate the issue of indigenous children in its teachings and research. Moreover, several distinguished academics have undertaken to participate in the formulation of a conceptual framework for the analysis of the fulfilment of rights of indigenous children.

33. In addition to achievements in the area of knowledge generation, public initiatives have been undertaken to increase the visibility of indigenous people. These include the organization of several fora and workshops and the preparations of a national campaign highlighting the cultural diversity of Mexico. The campaign will be launched in 2005.

Millennium Development Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education

34. Education is central to UNICEF activities; it is a tool to break the cycle of poverty. It teaches life skills and informs children and adolescents about HIV/AIDS, nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Schools also offer protection to children, by providing a safe space and keeping them off the streets and/or out of hazardous work. Furthermore, education can empower women and address gender inequalities. The challenge is to ensure that all children, including indigenous children, have access to quality education and actually attend school.

35. For many years, UNICEF has supported intercultural and bilingual education programmes for indigenous children. These programmes are based on studies showing that fulfilling the right to quality education for indigenous children requires special attention to their specific cultural and language needs. Indeed, intercultural and bilingual education is taught in indigenous languages (usually the children's

mother tongue), with the progressive introduction of the dominant language. Furthermore, intercultural and bilingual education takes into account indigenous cultures and ways of learning in the curriculum and teaching methods. UNICEF nonetheless believes that to be truly intercultural, education should involve not only indigenous but also non-indigenous children.

36. Within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals and the medium-term strategic plan for 2002-2005, UNICEF has reinforced its activities in the area of education, focusing on girls' education with a view to reaching gender equality in that field.

37. In Mexico, UNICEF has for several years supported the child-friendly school (Escuela Amiga) project, which takes a holistic approach to the right to education. As part of the commitment to the "All children in school" initiative in Chiapas and Yucatán, the Mexican national council of education promotion, which provides education to the most marginalized groups of society, including indigenous children, has adopted the child-friendly school model in all schools under its jurisdiction. An external evaluation, undertaken in 2004, confirmed that there was greater awareness in child-friendly school educational communities (teachers, parents and authorities) of the importance of education, including improved school environments, infrastructure and parent participation in school activities. Improvements were achieved by social mobilization efforts within the "All children in school" initiative, which involved a commitment from local authorities and communities to reach out to children not attending school and to heighten the quality of education.

38. The main areas of action were the promotion of children's rights, particularly those pertaining to education, health, water and sanitation, nutrition, identity and participation through the consolidation of alternative areas for learning (for example, interactive mobile playrooms (*ludotecas*)). Material on children's rights was translated into indigenous languages, while cultural activities reinforcing their indigenous identity were carried out. In an effort to strengthen and implement participation mechanisms, emphasis was placed on local organization and leadership training, focusing on women and young people in the indigenous communities.

39. Bolivia was selected to participate in the UNICEF "25 by 2005" initiative on girls' education, due to its high levels of dropout rates (especially among indigenous girls) and of women's illiteracy. The "25 by 2005" initiative aims to intensify efforts in 25 countries to maximize the number of girls in school by 2005. The lessons learned during this period will be applied to accelerating girls' education in other countries, until all children throughout the world enjoy the right to a quality education. Within this framework, in 2004 the country office in Bolivia began implementing the indigenous girls' education project; in only nine months, more than 4,000 girls in rural communities returned to school to continue their education. The project supported the building of boarding facilities for 422 girls living in remote rural areas. It also funded a school transportation system that ensures that over 250 children arrive to school on time and in better physical condition. The project also delivered school materials to 13,443 primary school students in selected municipalities.

40. In Ecuador, UNICEF promotes a holistic approach to intercultural education for all through three interconnected projects. The first project mobilizes consensus and revises legal and institutional frameworks to foster compliance with the Constitution, which envisages 10 years of universal basic education. Special

emphasis is placed on interculturalism; the development of a national plan for universal quality intercultural education, with associated short-term and long-term investment plans for basic education; and institutional capacity-building to implement the revised framework. The second project builds consensus for legislation supporting the right to universal access to culturally sensitive early childhood development programmes. The third project focuses on developing primary and secondary school programmes to detect and report cases of child abuse and family violence at home, as well as of child abuse and sexual harassment in schools; developing or expanding primary and secondary school programmes to detect and report child labour preventing school attendance; and reinstating child workers in the educational system.

41. In Malaysia, the Government and UNICEF developed a new version of education materials specific to the needs of the indigenous Orang Asli communities, organizing also a teacher training programme in August. Approximately 3,400 students from 11 schools benefited from the programme. Several publications were translated into indigenous languages, relating to family health, public health promotion, good eating habits, schooling and mathematics.

42. In the Philippines, consultations with the Department of Education have been held to explore alternative approaches to address the issues of large class sizes, increasing dropout rates and isolation of children in remote areas. Interventions will include distance-learning programmes and other proposals tested both in and out of school, for possible adoption in congested schools, remote areas and communities where there is a high concentration of indigenous peoples.

43. UNICEF is continuing its work towards universal primary education and encourages all players to take part in this effort.

Notes

[1] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children Report* (2005).